DC
BATMAN
379
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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
AT WAR WITH THE MINIONS OF THE
MAD HATTER!
HANNIGAN & GIORDANO
THE NEW
DC
THERE'S NO STOPPING US NOW.

WE LOST OUR CHANCE TO LOCATE NOCTURNA'S LOOT WHEN ROBIN CAPTURED OUR "VAMPIRE" COMPUTER...*
...BUT NOT TO WORRY, MY DEAR...
*SEE LAST ISSUE. --Len.
...BECAUSE THAT LITTLE PORTABLE MIND-SUCKER CAN ALSO SERVE AS VERY LARGE BAIT--
--TO CAPTURE SOME WONDERFULLY NASTY REVENGE.
AND THERE'S ANOTHER ONE FINISHED, MY DEAR--EACH AND EVERY EXQUISITELY DESIGNED HAT SOON TO PROVE THAT FOUR-FIFTHS OF THE BRAIN'S POTENTIAL NEED NOT BE WASTED.
MY WORK IS DONE-- AND SO, TO BED.
DOUG MOENCH WRITER
DON NEWTON & ALFREDO ALCALA ARTISTS
BEN ODA LETTERER
ADRIENNE ROY COLORIST
LEN WEIN EDITOR
HOPE TONIGHT'S DREAMS PROVE TO BE NICELY DEMENTED, DON'T YOU, DEAR?
Bedtime Stories

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THE NEXT DAY:
HAD NIGHTMARES ABOUT THIS -- MY FIRST OFFICIAL DAY AS A WRITER FOR PICTURE NEWS -- AND I'M LATE FOR MY FIRST ASSIGNMENT...
I GUESS REPORTERS ARE SUPPOSED TO SPEED -- BUT WHERE IS THE FIRE, LADY?
HERE IT IS.
THE EDITORS LIKED MY MR. FREEZE STORY WELL ENOUGH, BUT IT WAS GIVEN TO A "SEASONED VET" TO WRITE UP.
NOW VICKI VALE HAS GONE OUT ON A LONG LIMB TO GET ME THIS CHANCE AT ACTUAL WRITING, AND I DON'T WANT TO DISAPPOINT EITHER OF US.
BETTER TRY TO GET CLOSER TO THE--
OUTTA THE WAY, LADY -- PRESS.
UNH--!
I'M PRESS, TOO!
NEVER SEEN YA BEFORE.
JULIA REMARQUE FROM PICTURE NEWS!
OH, GROW UP, SISTER.
PRINT JOURNALISM IS FINISHED -- IT'S TOO COLD AND DATED -- IT'S DEAD AND DOESN'T EVEN KNOW IT.
YOU'RE NOTHING BUT AN ANONYMOUS BYLINE, WHILE MY CAMERAMAN AND I ARE OLIVIA ORTEGA -- INTIMATE GUEST IN THREE MILLION LIVING ROOMS EVERY NIGHT.
THE PUBLIC WANTS THE IMMEDIACY AND HOTNESS OF VIDEO JOURNALISM --
-- AND THE SOONER YOU DINOSAURS OF THE PRINT MEDIA REALIZE THAT AND GET OUT OF OUR WAY, THE BETTER!
2

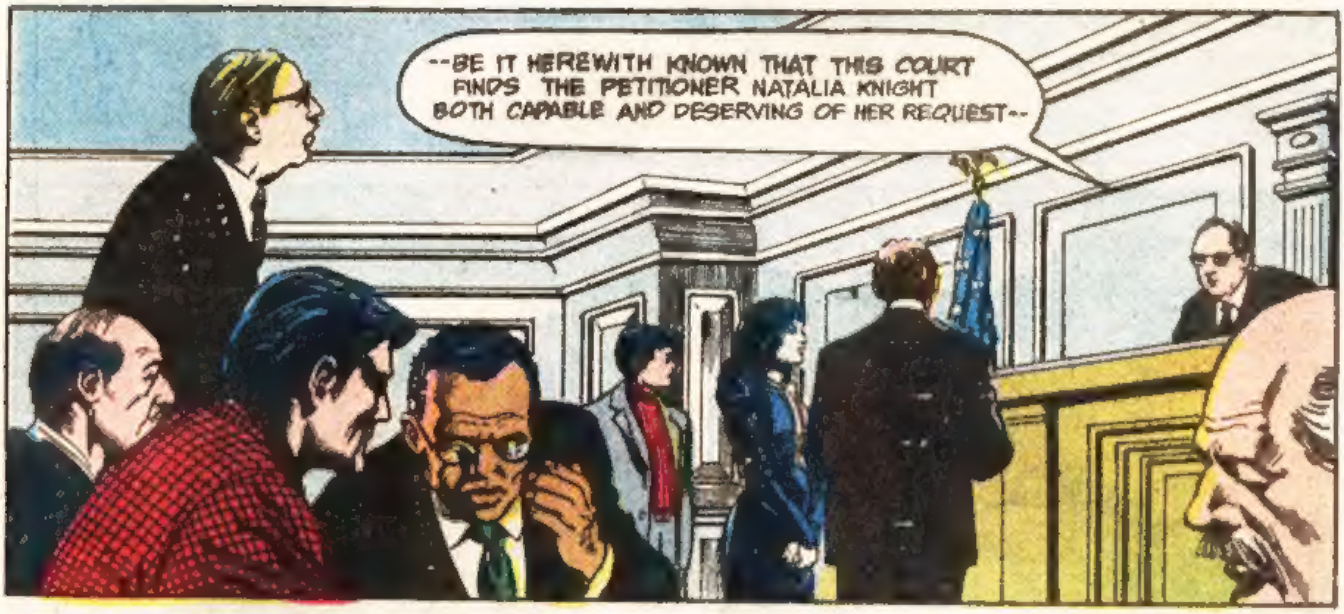
THIS IS OLIVIA ORTEGA FOR SPOTLIGHT NEWS, AT THE SCENE OF A RAGING FIRE ON...
SO MY NEW JOB IS DEAD -- BEFORE I'V EVEN STARTED?
I THINK NOT...
WAYNE MANOR: NIGHT...
JULIA'S FIRST STORY AND A BRILLIANT ONE, WRITTEN STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART...
SHE IGNORES THE TRADITIONAL "STORY" -- THE FIRE --
-- TO DWELL ON THE REAL STORY OF HER EXPERIENCE AND HER IMPRESSIONS OF THAT EXPERIENCE, MAKING IT MORE IMMEDIATE AND "ACCURATE" THAN ANY OTHER PIECE IN THE EDITION.
BY FOCUSING ON HER PERSONAL CONFLICT WITH OLIVIA ORTEGA -- BETWEEN OLD AND NEW, PRINT AND TELEVISION --
--SHE HAS FOUND A MOVING AND POWERFUL VOICE.
I SHOULD BE PROUD...
When the fire is too hot
Julia Pennyworth
... BUT INSTEAD I FEEL AS IF MY DAUGHTER HAS SLAPPED ME IN THE FACE... BY NOT USING THE BYLINE JULIA PENNYWORTH.
MORNING, ON THE CRUMBLING EASTERN FRINGE OF GOTHAM'S NORTHPOINT SECTOR...
HEY, LOUIE, YOU DIDN'T HAVE A HAT WHEN YOU WENT IN THERE.
PHARMACEUTICAL PACKAGING
WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THIS JOB LINE?
STICK IT UP TO YOUR NOSE.
HUH? WHAT'S WITH HIM?
3

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

ACROSS TOWN:
WELL, I CERTAINLY DIDN'T MAKE A MISTAKE. IT WAS A GREAT STORY, JULIA, AND YOUR DAYS AS A FILE CLERK ARE OVER.
PLUS -- AS UNUSUAL AS YOUR FIRST APPROACH WAS, I THINK YOU SHOULD STICK TO IT.
PIC YOUR TO
INDEED, YOUR FUTURE MAY WELL LIE IN FIRST-PERSON SUBJECTIVE PIECES -- A FEMALE GEORGE PLIMPTON OR HUNTER THOMPSON OF HUMAN INTEREST STORIES.
"HUMAN INTEREST," VICKI?
FOR THE TIME BEING.
NO DOUBT YOU'LL GRADUATE TO HARD NEWS, BUT TODAY'S THE FINAL JUDGMENT IN THE JASON TODD ADOPTION CASE, AND...
... I WANT YOU TO COVER IT.
JULIA'S EYES WIDEN.
YES, I KNOW. YOU'RE PERSONALLY INVOLVED WITH THE WAYNE HOUSEHOLD ... BUT THEN, AS I SAY, YOUR FORTE MAY BE THE SUBJECTIVE.
YOU'RE PERSONALLY INVOLVED, TOO -- ARE YOU GOING TO COVER IT?
WE... AH... WE HAVE FILE PHOTOS OF ALL THE PRINCIPALS...
...AND RIGHT NOW, MY FORTE IS ANYTHING BUT THE SUBJECTIVE.
BESIDES, BRUCE IS SHOOK UP ENOUGH. MY PRESENCE WOULD ONLY ADD MORE STRAIN, AND...
5
JULIA LEAVES.

PICTURE NEWS SPECIAL REPORT:
THE FATE OF JASON

By Julia ReMarque

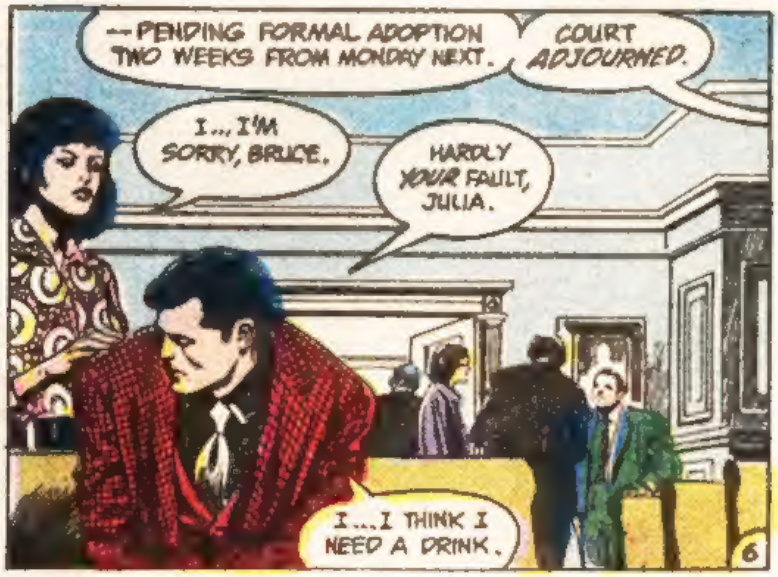


I know Bruce Wayne personally. When I first arrived in Gotham from France, I stayed in his home for a month, and though our ages are close, he was much like a father to me. Today, another month later, Bruce Wayne's efforts to become Jason Todd's father were crushed by a single sharp rap of the judicial gavel.

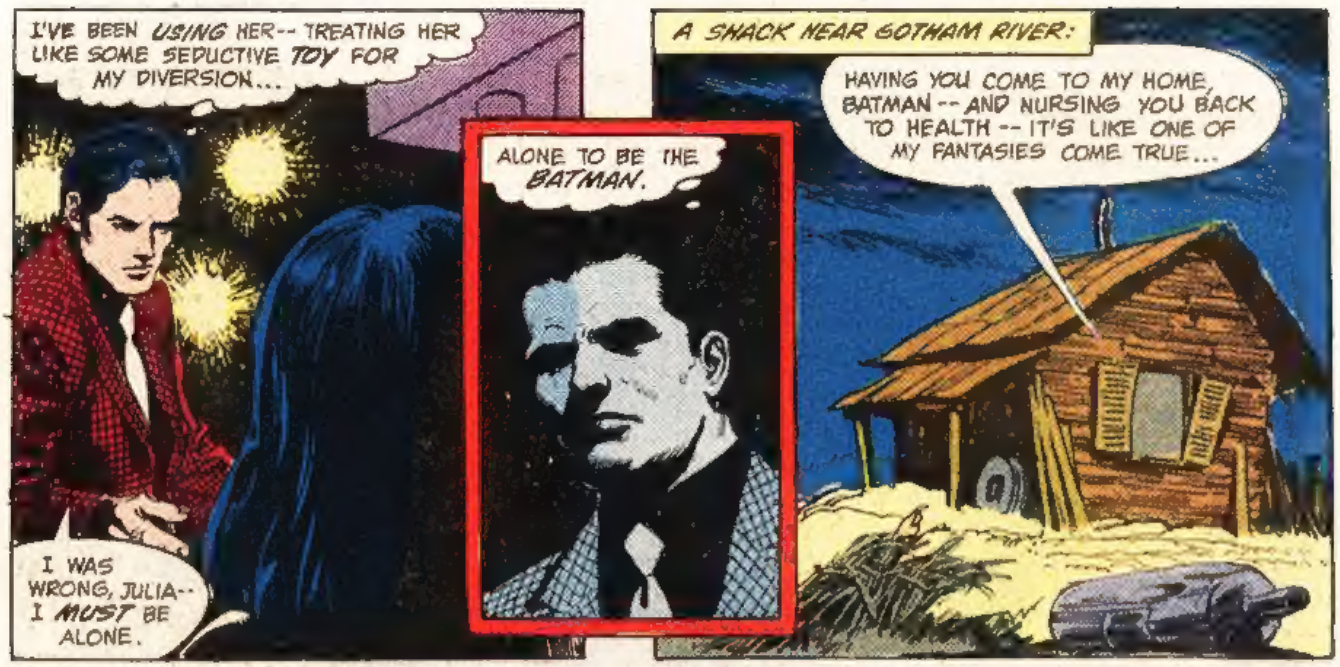
Never mind that Natalia Knight, who was instead awarded custody of Jason, has been accused of being a criminal by the Batman, among others.

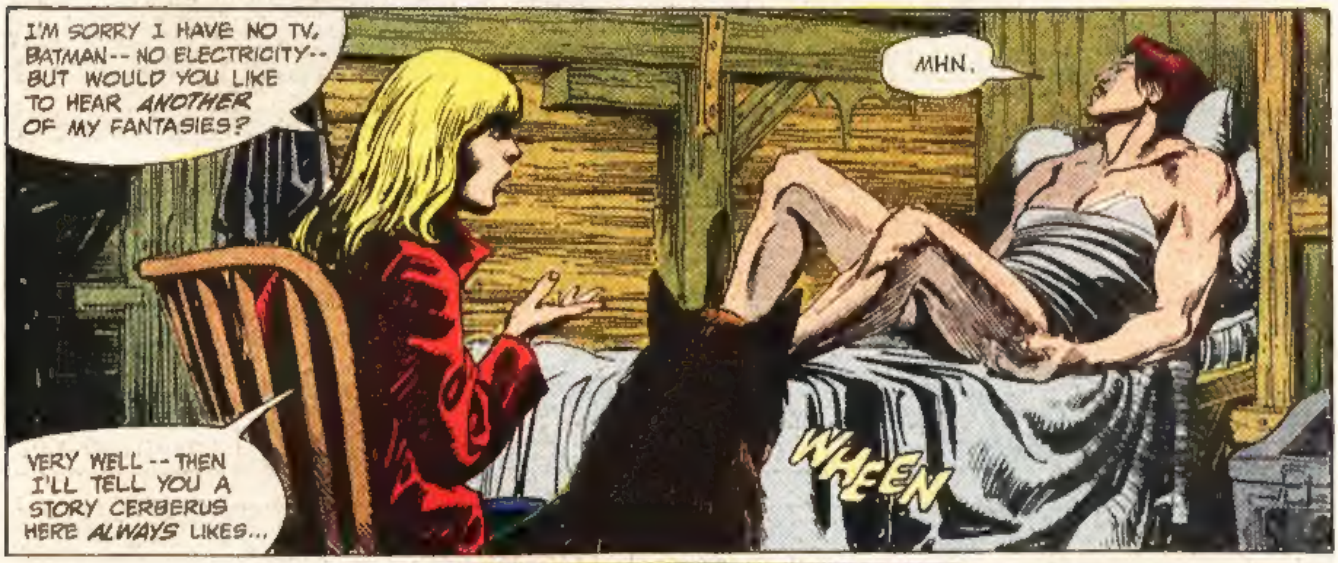
What matters most to me is how Bruce Wayne's hat was crushed in his hands when the judge took away the boy who has been a son in truth, if not in blood or law.

I tried to comfort Bruce Wayne today, prodigal "daughter" that I am, but I'm certain my efforts were no more successful than his own.


--PENDING FORMAL ADOPTION TWO WEEKS FROM MONDAY NEXT.
COURT ADJOURNED.
I... I'M SORRY, BRUCE.
HARDLY YOUR FAULT, JULIA.
I...I THINK I NEED A DRINK.
6

VICKI--!
BILL--BILL MODELL ...WHAT DO YOU--
I MIGHT AS WELL JUST COME OUT AND BLURT IT, VICKI.
I'VE STILL GOT A STRONG THING FOR YOU.
NEVER THOUGHT I WAS THE FAMILY TYPE... BUT LATELY...
WELL, I'VE BEEN THINKING IT MIGHT BE NICE TO HAVE A SON...
OH, GOD... NO!
VICKI! VICKI, WAIT!
WHAT DID I SAY--?!
THIS WON'T BE AN EASY STORY TO WRITE, BRUCE...
JASON WILL BE BACK--I KNOW IT--BUT NOT EVEN JULIA, AS BEAUTIFUL AS SHE IS, CAN SHAKE ME OUT OF MY DANGEROUS ATTRACTION TO NOCTURNA. THE WOMAN IS A CRIMINAL WHO'S STOLEN JASON AWAY FROM ME, AND I SHOULD DESPISE HER, BUT...
I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY SHE APPEALS TO THE SIDE OF ME WHICH IS BATMAN--DESPITE HER PALLOR, SHE SEEMS SO MUCH DARKER AND MORE MYSTERIOUS THAN VICKI VALE...
...AND YET JULIA IS DARK... BUT I STILL CAN'T SHAKE NATALIA KNIGHT FROM MY MIND OR--
BRUCE...IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP...
EH--? JULIA.
7


I'VE BEEN USING HER-- TREATING HER LIKE SOME SEDUCTIVE TOY FOR MY DIVERSION...
I WAS WRONG, JULIA-- I MUST BE ALONE.
ALONE TO BE THE BATMAN.
A SHACK NEAR GOTHAM RIVER:
HAVING YOU COME TO MY HOME, BATMAN -- AND NURSING YOU BACK TO HEALTH -- IT'S LIKE ONE OF MY FANTASIES COME TRUE...

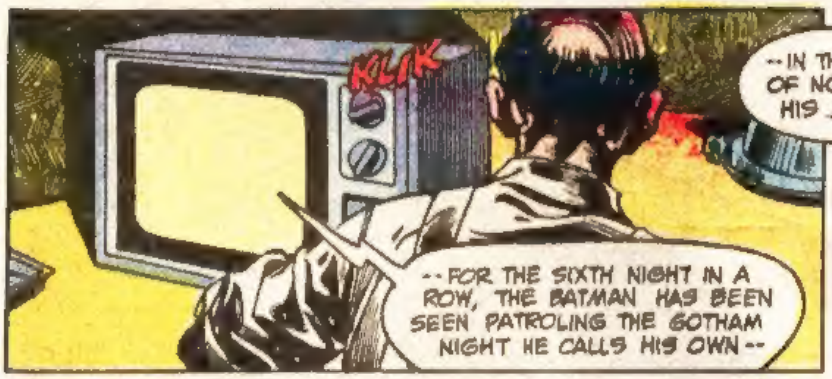

I'M SORRY I HAVE NO TV, BATMAN-- NO ELECTRICITY-- BUT WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR ANOTHER OF MY FANTASIES?
MHN.
VERY WELL -- THEN I'LL TELL YOU A STORY CERBERUS HERE ALWAYS LIKES...
WHEEN

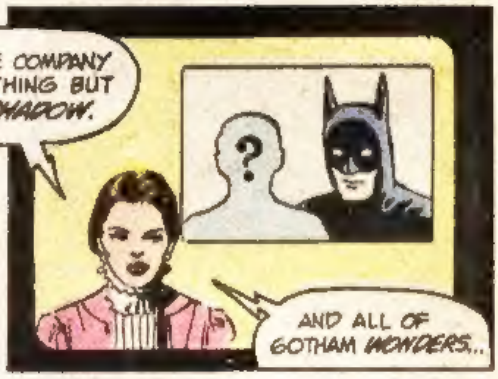
... A STORY OF DARKNESS, AND THE BEAUTY TO BE FOUND IN BLINDNESS, WHICH IS NOTHING LESS THAN A STATE OF WAKING DREAMS...

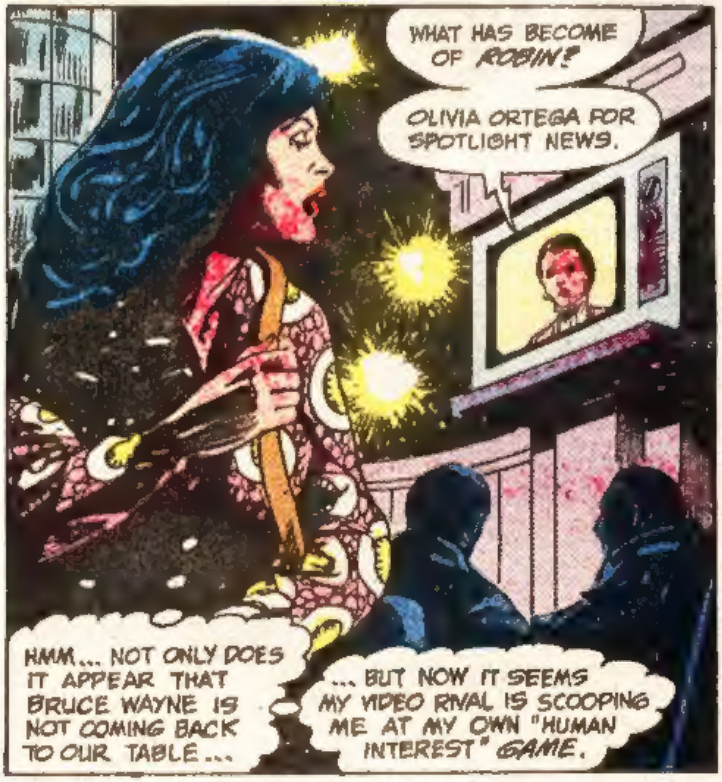
WAYNE MANOR: EVEN NOW, LATE IN THE EVENING, THE STORY STILL STINGS.
SOMETHING WRONG, ALFRED? IF IT'S ABOUT JASON, DON'T FORGET IT'S ONLY ROUND TWO.
YOU HAD A CALL FROM LUCIUS FOX AT THE WAYNE FOUNDATION, SIR.
YOU'RE TO CALL HIM THERE -- HE'S WORKING LATE.
8

YES, BRUCE, THIS IS LUCIUS.
LISTEN -- OUR BOYS HAVE FINALLY CRACKED THE CODE ON THIS PORTABLE COMPUTER YOU DROPPED OFF.
THEY'VE BEEN MILKING IT, BUT SO FAR NOT MUCH CREAM... OTHER THAN RECORDS OF A SHIPMENT OF HATS --
-- INCLUDING THE DELIVERY ADDRESS... AN ABANDONED PHARMACEUTICAL WAREHOUSE IN NORTHPOINT.

THAT COULD BE IT, LUCIUS.
GIVE ME THE EXACT ADDRESS...


KLIK
-- FOR THE SIXTH NIGHT IN A ROW, THE BATMAN HAS BEEN SEEN PATROLING THE GOTHAM NIGHT HE CALLS HIS OWN --


-- IN THE COMPANY OF NOTHING BUT HIS SHADOW.
?
AND ALL OF GOTHAM WONDERS...


WHAT HAS BECOME OF ROBIN?
OLIVIA ORTEGA FOR SPOTLIGHT NEWS.
HMM... NOT ONLY DOES IT APPEAR THAT BRUCE WAYNE IS NOT COMING BACK TO OUR TABLE...
... BUT NOW IT SEEMS MY VIDEO RIVAL IS SCOOPING ME AT MY OWN "HUMAN INTEREST" GAME.

IF OLIVIA ORTEGA HAS ALREADY NOTICED, SIR, ROBIN'S ABSENCE COULD QUICKLY BECOME A SERIOUS PROBLEM...
YES... SOONER OR LATER, SOMEONE WILL CONNECT IT TO BRUCE WAYE'S LOSS OF JASON TODD.

SO PERHAPS I'D BEST TACKLE THE JASON-ROBIN PROBLEM--
-- BEFORE FOLLOWING LUCIUS' CLUE TO THE MAD HATTER.
BUT DEEP IN GOTHAM'S SQUALOR:
PHARMACEUTICAL
• PACKAGING •
AH! COME TO INTERVIEW FOR THE JOB, HAVE YOU?
LOUIE SAID THIS WAS THE PLACE -- SAID YOU NEEDED GUYS FOR A SPECIAL DEAL GOIN' DOWN.
YES, YES -- DO COME IN AND LIE DOWN, PLEASE.
WHATTA YOU, CRAZY? I DON'T LIE DOWN FOR NOBODY -- NOT EVEN YOU, HATTER.
IF YOU WANT THE JOB -- AND DON'T WANT LOUIE STICKING HIS KNIFE BETWEEN YOUR RIBS -- HUMOR ME.
THAAAT'S BETTER.
NOW I'M GONNA TELL YOU A STORY... A NICE CALM SOOTHING DREAMY STORY...
...JUST LIKE THE STORIES YOUR MOTHER TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU WENT TO SLEEP.. SLEEP... RESTFUL, RELAXING, SOOTHING --
KNUP
-- SLEEP!
H-HUH...?
10
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

YOU ARE NOW UNDER MY COMPUTERIZED CONTROL-- AS ARE THE NORMALLY DORMANT OTHER FOUR-FIFTHS OF YOUR BRAIN.
GIVEN THE FULL RESOURCES OF THAT BRAIN, YOUR BODY WILL BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING.
YOU WILL COMB THE STREETS OF GOTHAM IN SEARCH OF THE BATMAN, AND YOU WILL BE TIRELESS.
WHEN YOU LOCATE THE BATMAN, YOU WILL EITHER KILL HIM...
...OR ATTACH THIS HOMING DEVICE TO THE FOLDS OF HIS CLOAK.
YOU SEE, MY DEAR?
I NOW WEAR THE HAT OF ZOMBIE-MASTER.
AND ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, OUR CAMPAIGN MUST AND WILL SUCCEED.
OOOOH
AND, AN HOUR LATER, AS THE BATMAN ONCE AGAIN MOVES TOWARD THAT PLACE HE BOTH DREADS AND FINDS IRRESISTIBLE--
--NOCTURNA'S PENT-HOUSE SUITE AT THE RITZ-CARLTON --
--HIS SHADOW SKIMS THE QUESTING FORM OF LOUIE'S PAL, WHO NEVER WEARS HATS...
...BUT WHO IS HAROLD LACKING IN EXPERIENCE WITH FIRE ESCAPES.
11

THE PENTHOUSE SUITE OF THE RITZ-CARLTON:
HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET THE GOODS ON HER YET...
NO ACTUAL PROOF THAT NATALIA IS REALLY THE CRIMINAL MOCTURNA.
BUT MAYBE TOMORROW SHE WON'T WATCH ME SO CLOSELY -- LIKE SOME OVER-ATTENTIVE MOTHER...
JASON--?

I THOUGHT I MIGHT. TELL YOU A BEDTIME STORY.
I DON'T SEE ANY BOOK, NATALIA
STORIES DIE WHEN THEY ARE BURIED IN BOOKS.

NOW... JUST LET YOUR MIND DRIFT IN THE DARKNESS... AND BE AWARE OF NOTHING BUT MY VOICE... MY STORY...
... OF MOTHER NIGHT'S ELEGANCE, AND HER SOOTHING EMBRACE.

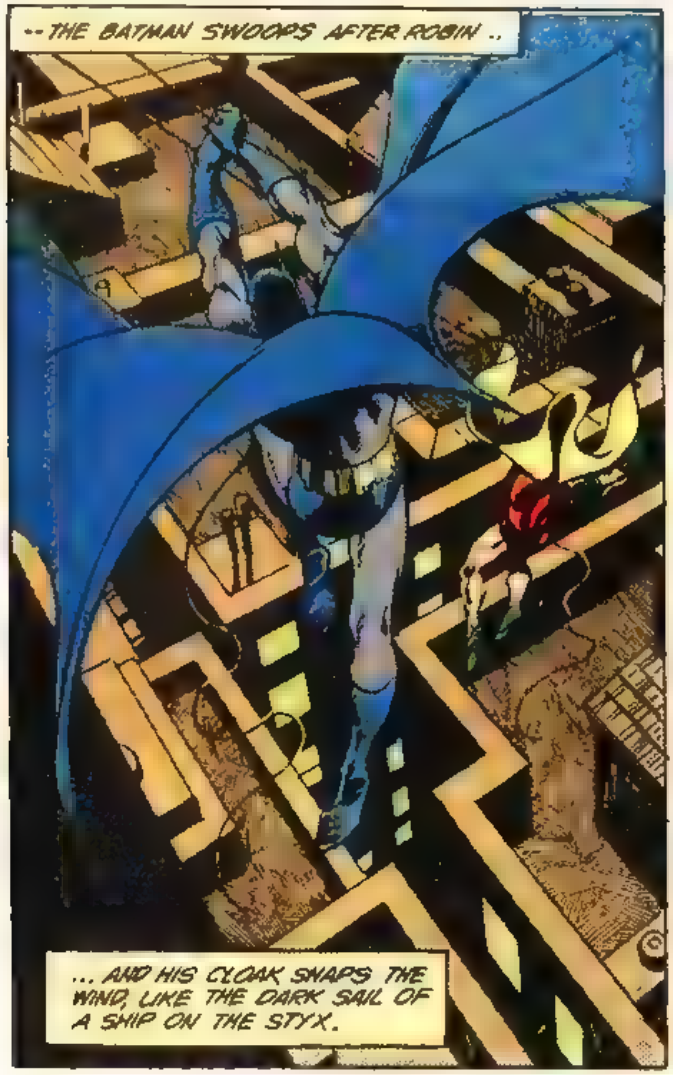
SHE IS THE SOURCE OF DARKNESS AND SECURITY, THE SECRET PLACE WHERE DREAMS ARE BORN.
SHE IS REST FOR THE WEARY, COMFORT TO ALL WHO SEEK AND ACCEPT HER...

"SHE IS A TAPESTRY OF GRACEFUL MYSTERY...
SWOKT
"...OF SURPRISES UNSEEN...
"...AND OF THE IMPOSSIBLE COME TRUE.
WRUNK
"SHE IS SOMETIMES LIGHTNING...
"...SOMETIMES THUNDER...
THROK
"...BUT SHE IS EVER THE PEACE OF SLEEP...
UHNNN...
AFTER THE WAY HE UPROOTED THAT CHIMNEY, I EXPECTED A LOT MORE OF A FIGHT...
13
"...AND YET HERS IS A SLEEP WHICH MAY BE TRANSCENDED, BY THOSE WITH THE WILL."
CONTINUED ON 3rd PAGE FOLLOWING

ALMOST AS IF ALL HIS STRENGTH SUDDENLY LEFT HIM FOR SOME REASON.
I'LL USE A CALLBOX -- TELL BULLOCK HE'S HERE...
...THEN CONTINUE TO THE RITZ-CARLTON.
MUST'VE LOST HIS HAT SOMEHOW -- PROVING AGAIN, MY DEAR, THAT THE BATMAN IS A MOST DIFFICULT MAN TO KILL -- BUT AT LEAST THE BUG HAS BEEN NESTLED IN HIS CAPE...
VEEP VEEP VEEP
OOH!
LET'S FOLLOW IT, SHALL WE?
AND IN HER DARK CLOUDS DRIFTING UNDER THE MOON..
--WHERE FANTASY FREELY FLOATS, CLAD IN JET AND SILVER...
...MOTHER NIGHT'S EMBRACE IS THE MOST SOOTHING OF ALL...
MMMNNN..
NO! I WON'T FALL UNDER YOUR SPELL, NATALIA! I REFUSE TO!
VERY WELL, JASON... I WILL CONCEDE THE "DEFEAT"...
...AND RECOGNIZE THAT YOU ARE ROBIN EVEN MORE THAN YOU ARE JASON.
RIGHT NOW, YES
I'VE BEEN JASON ALL MY LIFE -- ROBIN'S GOT A LOT OF CATCHING UP TO DO.
AND THE NIGHT OF THE BATMAN HOLDS GREATER ALLURE THAN DOES MY VERSION OF DARKNESS?
14

AGAIN, YEAH -- BUT I GOTTA ADMIT, NATALIA, IF I WERE OLDER, YOU'D GIVE BATMAN A GOOD RUN FOR HIS SHADOW... AND I'D BE REAL TEMPTED.
IT WOULD BE THE SAME AS MY OWN ATTRACTION FOR--
THE BATMAN!
NOCTURNA... NATALIA... I NEED ROBIN.
AND THE BOY NEEDS YOU, BATMAN, AS WE BOTH DO... AND AS I NEED THE BOY.
IF YOU WERE OLDER, JASON, THE ATTRACTION WOULD HARDLY BE THAT OF A SON FOR HIS MOTHER.
YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF MY IDENTITY AGAINST ME.
NOR SHALL I, BRUCE WAYNE.
BUT IF I NEED JASON FOR INNOCENT REASONS --MATERNAL REASONS?
EVEN IF THE COURT SAYS HE IS YOUR "SON," HE'S ALSO ROBIN -- AND ROBIN BELONGS WITH THE BATMAN
YOU CAN'T TAKE HIS NIGHTS, LEAVING ME ONLY THE DAYLIGHT HOURS.
I WILL NOT SURRENDER THE DARKNESS -- NOT EVEN TO YOU, BATMAN. I--
YOU DON'T HAVE ANY CHOICE, NATALIA.
LET'S GO, BATMAN.
15

IT'S TIME TO BE WHAT WE ARE
IF THE BOY DOES NOT YET LOVE ME, BATMAN --
--THE MAN DOES... AND YOU KNOW IT.
YOU CANNOT FORGET ME... AND YOU CAN NEVER ESCAPE THE NIGHT.
IT IS THE BLOOD PULSING IN YOUR HEART.
SAYING NOTHING--

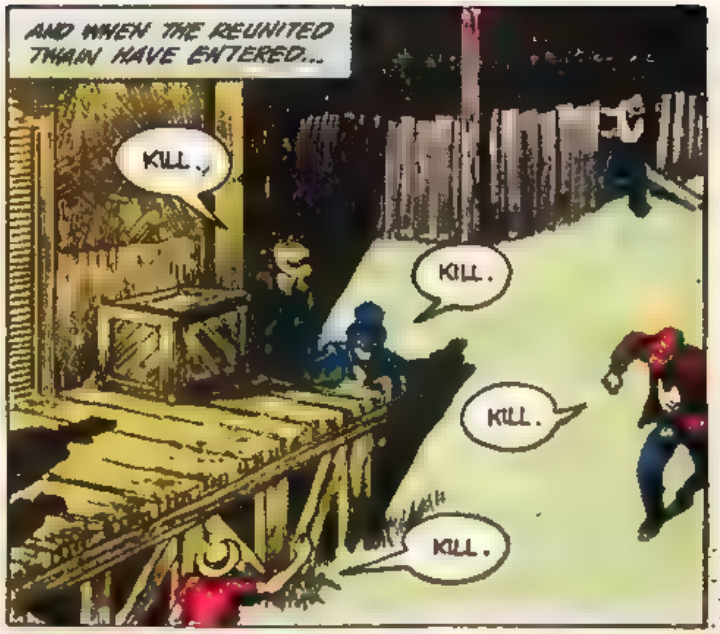


A PALE GHOST IN THE SHADOWS LEFT BEHIND, NATALIA KNIGHT STARES AFTER THE MAN AND THE BOY...
... THEN REMOVES JUST ENOUGH OF HER FUNEREAL ATTIRE TO MOURN NO MORE...
... AND TO BECOME THE NIGHT'S WIND ITSELF.
16

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

WHERE TO, BATMAN?
UNFINISHED BUSINESS, ROBIN -- WITH THE MAD HATTER.
LUCIUS AND HIS COMPUTER BOYS AT THE WAYNE FOUNDATION MANAGED TO GOOSE A PRIME CLUE FROM THE HATTER'S PORTABLE COMPUTER.
HERE'S A GIGGLE, MY DEAR -- I HAVE ALWAYS PREFERRED "HATLESS CARS" LIKE THIS CONVERTIBLE FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT MY HAT WOULD NEVER FIT IN--
VEEP VEEP VEEP
AHAH! ACCORDING TO THE HOMING SIGNAL, HE'S HEADING FOR OUR HIDEOUT -- AS I KNEW HE WOULD.
TEK
TIME TO SET THE TRAP--
"--BY ACTIVATING MY MINDLESS REGIMENT'S COMBAT HELMETS."
ZEET
ZEET
ZEET
ZEET
PHARMACEUTICAL PACKAGING, BATMAN--?
YES, A PLACE WHERE THEY ONCE MADE "PILLBOXES"..
...ANOTHER NAME FOR HATS
CEUTICAL
PACKAGING
HOLD ONTO YOURS, ROBIN, AND LET'S GO.

THE HATTER REALLY IS MAD, YOU KNOW.
BE ALERT FOR ANYTHING, ROBIN-- IN TOTAL SILENCE.
I'M COOL--LET'S DO IT.


AND WHEN THE REUNITED TWAIN HAVE ENTERED...
KILL.
KILL.
KILL.
KILL.

SINCE YOU REFUSE TO TELL ME HOW YOU CAME TO BE NAMED CAROL LEWIS, MY DEAR--
--WE MAY AS WELL PARK BEHIND "WONDERLAND UNLTD." HERE.

...WELL WITHIN CLOSED-CIRCUIT RANGE...
...TO TUNE IN SOME REVENGE, SWEET REVENGE.

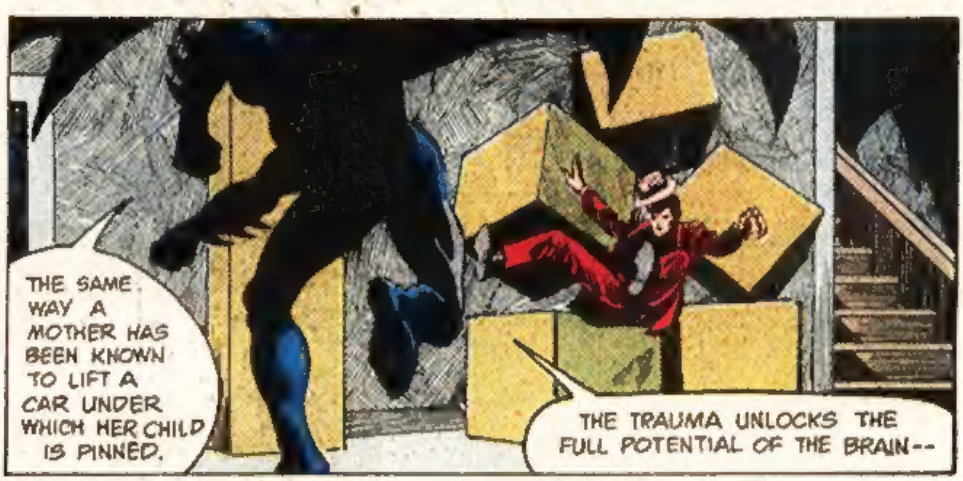
AND IF MY HATTED "SUPERMEN" FAIL, WE SIMPLY USE THE DASHBOARD DETONATOR TO BLOW THE ENTIRE HIDEOUT STRAIGHT BACK TO THE CROWN OF CREATION
AHHH, JUST LIKE A BEDTIME STORY ON OUR VERY OWN PRIVATE LATE SHOW...

HATS, BATMAN-- AND TV CAMERAS!
WELCOME TO THE TEA PARTY, BATMAN
IT'S A TRAP--THE WHOLE THING--MAYBE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING...!
18

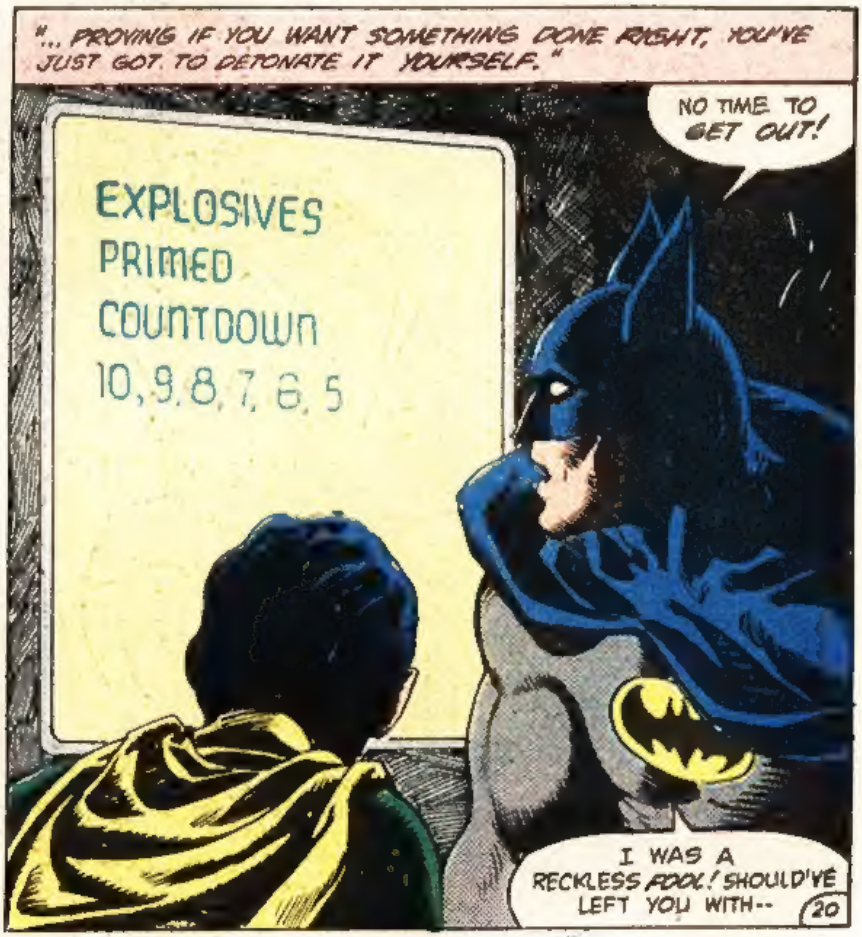
YOU MEAN THE HATTER WANTED ME TO GET THAT COMPUTER--
--JUST SO IT'D LEAD US HERE?!
KILL!
KILL!
IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY, ROBIN.
OOOF
KILL!
KILL!
KILL!
THEIR VOCABULARY MAY BE LIMITED, BATMAN--BUT THEY SEEM TO BE LIFTING THINGS THAT'D GIVE A HERNIA TO HERCULES.
YES
--SO WE'LL HAVE TO RELY ON SPEED AND AGILITY--
--RATHER THAN RAW STRENGTH,
KWOK
KWOPP
YOU'RE PLAYIN' MY TUNE...
... BUT HOW'D THEY GET SO STRONG?
19

THEIR HATS, ROBIN -- ELECTRONICALLY HYPING THEIR BRAINS TO PRODUCE MORE ADRENALIN OR SOME OTHER STRENGTH-ENHANCING REACTION!

SO WE COCK THEIR HATS TO KAYO THEM, HUH?
TOO BAD THERE'S NO SNOWBALLS IN HERE...
...BUT I STILL DON'T SEE HOW --

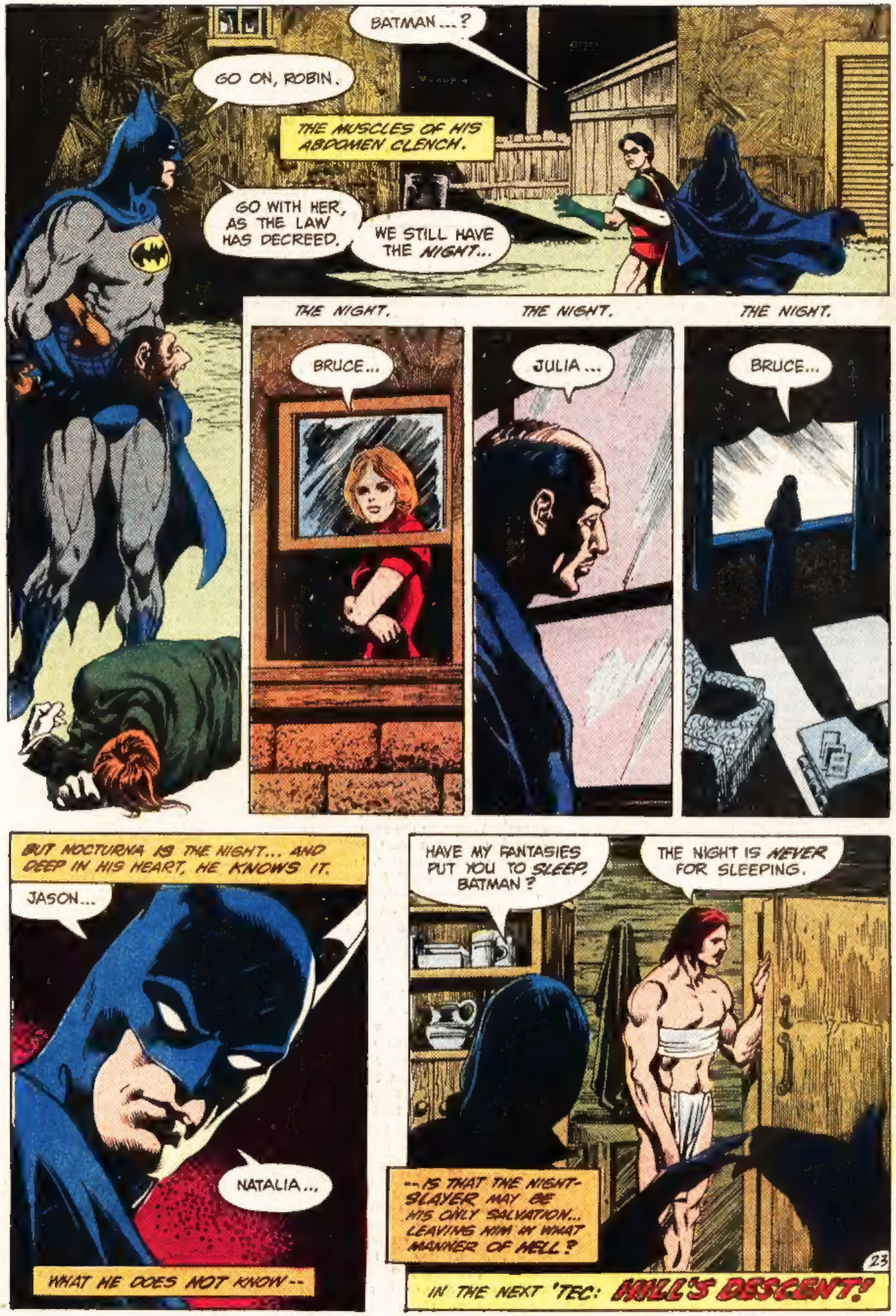

THE SAME WAY A MOTHER HAS BEEN KNOWN TO LIFT A CAR UNDER WHICH HER CHILD IS PINNED.
THE TRAUMA UNLOCKS THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE BRAIN--

--AND THE FREED BRAIN UNLOCKS THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE BODY.
OH DEAR, MY DEAR-- ANOTHER HATLESS DUD BITES THE DUST...


"... PROVING IF YOU WANT SOMETHING DONE RIGHT, YOU'VE JUST GOT TO DETONATE IT YOURSELF."
NO TIME TO GET OUT!
EXPLOSIVES PRIMED COUNTDOWN 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5
I WAS A RECKLESS FOOL! SHOULD'VE LEFT YOU WITH--

--FOUR, THREE, TWO--
FWITT
TUNGGG
WHO--?!!
NOCTURNA.
21

AND NOW --
CHUFF
--GOOD NIGHT.
THE COUNTDOWN, BATMAN--IT'S REACHED ZERO -- BUT NOTHING HAPPENED
YES... MEANING SOMETHING DID HAPPEN--TO AVERT CATASTROPHE.
BUT... WHAT?
OUTSIDE, IN DARKNESS!
A GIFT, BATMAN...
...A GIFT OF THE NIGHT.
NOCTURNA!
YOU... SAVED OUR LIVES--
I DID ONLY WHAT ANY WOMAN WOULD DO FOR HER MAN AND CHILD.
--BUT YOU'RE STILL A CRIMINAL, AND I WON'T--
COME, JASON -- YOU HAVE SCHOOL TOMORROW...
... AND MUST REST.
22
CONCLUDED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING


BATMAN...?
GO ON, ROBIN.
THE MUSCLES OF HIS ABDOMEN CLENCH.
GO WITH HER, AS THE LAW HAS DECREED.
WE STILL HAVE THE NIGHT...
THE NIGHT.
THE NIGHT.
THE NIGHT.
BRUCE...
JULIA...
BRUCE...
BUT NOCTURNA IS THE NIGHT... AND DEEP IN HIS HEART, HE KNOWS IT.
JASON...
NATALIA...
WHAT HE DOES NOT KNOW--
HAVE MY FANTASIES PUT YOU TO SLEEP, BATMAN?
THE NIGHT IS NEVER FOR SLEEPING.
--IS THAT THE NIGHT-SLAYER MAY BE HIS ONLY SALVATION... LEAVING HIM IN WHAT MANNER OF HELL?
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IN THE NEXT 'TEC: NELL'S DESCENT!